ingenia se sponte potius ad alias artes vel Philosophiam applicent: hoc enim accidit, quia confidentius sibi quisque dat divinandi licentiam in re obscura, quam in evidenti,[16]
[366] et | longe facilius est de qualibet quaestione aliquid suspicari, quam in una quantumvis facili ad ipsammet veritatem pervenire.

6. Jam vero ex his omnibus est concludendum, non quidem solas Arithmeticam et Geometriam esse addiscendas, sed tantummodo rectum veritatis iter quaerentes circa nullum objectum debere occupari, de quo non possint habere certitudinem Arithmeticis et Geometricis demonstrationibus aequalem.

Regula III

De intuitione et deductione

Circa objecta proposita non quid alii senserint, vel quid ipsi suspicemur, sed quid clare et evidenter possimus intueri, vel certo deducere quaerendum est; non aliter enim scientia acquiritur.

1. Legendi sunt Antiquorum libri, quoniam ingens beneficium est tot hominum laboribus nos uti posse: tum ut illa, quae jam olim recte inventa sunt, cognoscamus, tum etiam ut quaenam ulterius in omnibus disciplinis supersint excogitanda admoneamur. Sed interim valde periculosum est, ne quae forsitan errorum maculae, ex illorum nimis attenta lectione contractae, quantumlibet invitis et caventibus nobis adhaereant. Eo enim scriptores solent esse ingenio, ut, quoties in alicujus opinionis controversae discrimen inconsulta credulitate delapsi sunt, nos semper eodem trahere conentur subtilissi-
[367] mis argumentis; contra vero, quoties aliquid certum et evidens feliciter invenerunt, | nunquam exhibeant nisi variis ambagibus involutum, timentes scilicet ne simplicitate rationis inventi dignitas minuatur, vel quia nobis invident apertam veritatem.

2. Nunc autem, quantumvis essent omnes ingenui et aperti, nec ulla nobis unquam dubia pro veris obtruderent, sed cuncta exponerent bona fide, quia tamen vix quidquam ab uno dictum est, cujus contrarium ab aliquo alio non afferatur, semper essemus incerti, utri credendum foret. Et nihil prodesset suffragia numerare, ut illam sequeremur opinionem, quae plures habet Auctores: nam, si agatur de quaestione difficili, magis credibile est ejus veritatem a paucis inveniri potuisse, quam a multis. Sed quamvis etiam omnes inter se consentirent, non tamen sufficeret illorum doctrina: neque enim unquam, verbi gratia, Mathematici evaderemus,[17] licet omnes aliorum demonstrationes memoria teneamus, nisi simus etiam ingenio apti ad quaecumque problemata

[16] A, AT, C, and SGZ: evidenti … in. Missing in H. L fills the lacuna with: [et facilius est de multis quaestionibus difficilibus probabiliter disserere].

[17] H, C, and SGZ: evaderemus. A and AT: evademus.

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apply their natural intelligence to other arts or to philosophy. For this happens because everyone gives himself the license to guess more confidently in an obscure matter than in an evident one, and it is much easier to conjecture something about this or that question than to arrive at the truth itself about one question, however easy.

6. Yet, from all these considerations, one now has to conclude, not at all that arithmetic and geometry alone are to be studied, but rather only that those who are seeking the right path to the truth should concern themselves with no object about which they could not possess a certainty equal to the demonstrations of arithmetic and of geometry.[29]

Rule Three

On Intuition and Deduction

Concerning proposed objects, one has to investigate, not what others may have felt or what we ourselves shall conjecture, but what we can clearly and evidently intuit or certainly deduce – for knowledge is acquired in no other way.

1. Since it is a great benefit for us to be able to make use of the labors of so many human beings, we have to read the books of the ancients, both in order to learn those things which have already once been correctly discovered, and in order to be informed about those things, above and beyond these, which remain to be thought out in all the disciplines. But there is, at the same time, a great danger that, as it were, the stains of the errors contracted from these books by an all too attentive reading could stick to us, however unwilling and cautious.[30] For writers tend to possess such natural intelligence that, whenever they have erred off, through thoughtless credulity, into a decision on some controversial opinion, they always attempt, by the most subtle arguments, to drag us in that direction; whereas, on the other hand, whenever they have been lucky enough to discover something certain and evident, they never present it except as involved in various ambiguities, fearing, as it were, that the simplicity of the reasoning might diminish the importance of the finding, or because they begrudge us the plain truth.[31]

2. Now, however, even if all were frank and open, and they never tried to impose on us any doubtful matters as true, but rather put forward all things in good faith, we would still always be uncertain which of them to believe, since hardly anything is said by one the contrary of which is not asserted by another. It would be useless to count votes, in order that we might follow that opinion which more authors share.[32] For, if it is a matter of a difficult question, then it is more plausible that few rather than many have been able to discover the truth about it. But, even if they did all agree among themselves, their teaching would still not suffice. For, even though we might memorize all the demonstrations of others, we could never become mathematicians, for example, unless we were also apt, by virtue of natural intelligence, at solving any given problems;

[29] Cf. R. 9, § 4.

[30] On Descartes' view of reading cf. *Discourse*, pt. I, § 6 ff., esp. AT, VI, 5–6. Cf. also Montaigne, *Essais*, esp. bk. II, ch. 10 ('On books').

[31] Cf. R. 4, §§ 3 and 5.

[32] Cf. Terence, *Phormio*, 454: 'Quot homines, tot sententiae.'

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resolvenda; vel Philosophi, si omnia Platonis et Aristotelis argumenta legerimus, de propositis autem rebus stabile judicium ferre nequeamus: ita enim, non scientias videremur didicisse, sed historias.

3. Monemur praeterea, nullas omnino conjecturas nostris de rerum veritate judiciis esse unquam admiscendas. Cujus rei animadversio non exigui est momenti: neque enim potior ratio est, quare nihil jam in vulgari Philosophia reperiatur tam evidens et certum, ut in controversiam adduci non possit, quam quia primum studiosi, res perspi-
[368] cuas et certas agnoscere non con|tenti, obscuras etiam et ignotas, quas probabilibus tantum conjecturis attingebant, ausi sunt asserere; quibus sensim postea ipsimet integram adhibentes fidem, atque illas cum veris et evidentibus permiscentes sine discrimine, nihil tandem concludere potuerunt, quod non ex aliqua ejusmodi propositione pendere videretur, ac proinde quod non esset incertum.

4. Sed ne deinceps in eundem errorem delabamur, hic recensentur omnes intellectus nostri actiones, per quas ad rerum cognitionem absque ullo deceptionis metu[18] possimus pervenire: admittunturque tantum duae, intuitus scilicet et deductio.[19]

5. Per intuitum intelligo, non fluctuantem sensuum fidem, vel male componentis imaginationis judicium fallax; sed mentis purae et attentae tam facilem distinctumque conceptum, ut de eo, quod intelligimus, nulla prorsus dubitatio relinquatur; seu, quod idem est, mentis purae et attentae non dubium conceptum, qui a sola rationis luce nascitur, et ipsamet deductione certior est, quia[20] simplicior, quam tamen etiam ab homine male fieri non posse supra notavimus. Ita unusquisque animo potest intueri, se

[18] A, AT, C, and SGZ: metu … scilicet. Missing in H. L crosses out 'et inductio', which follows 'deceptionis', and fills the lacuna with: [periculo liceat pervenire].

[19] C and SGZ: intuitus scilicet et deductio. H, A, and AT: intuitus scilicet et inductio. N: te weten d'inzieninge en d'afleiding. N also adds in the margin: Intuitus. Deductio.

[20] A, AT, C, and SGZ: quia … notavimus. Missing in H, which reads: quimus. L notes, but does not fill, the lacuna.

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nor could we ever become philosophers, if we had read all the arguments of Plato and of Aristotle, but were unable to form a sound judgment on the matters proposed. For thus we would seem to have learned, not scientific, but historical, disciplines.

3. We are warned, in addition, never to mix any conjectures whatsoever into our judgments about the truth of things. Attention to this point is not of slight import. For the most important reason why one does not yet find, in the vulgar philosophy, anything so evident and so certain that it could not be rendered controversial is that, first, those studying it, not content to recognize perspicuous and certain things, have even dared to assert obscure and unknown ones, which they have reached by merely probable conjectures; then, gradually acquiring complete faith in these, and indiscriminately mixing them up with true and evident ones, they have, finally, been unable to draw any conclusions which would not seem to depend on some proposition of the obscure and unknown sort, and which were hence not uncertain.[33]

4. But, so that henceforth we might not fall into the same error, we here review all the actions of our intellect by means of which we could arrive at a knowledge of things without any fear of making a mistake. We recognize only two, namely, intuition and deduction.[34]

5. By 'intuition' I understand, neither the fluctuating testimony of the senses nor the deceptive judgment of an imagination which composes things badly, but rather the conceptual act of the pure and attentive mind, a conceptual act so easy and so distinct that no doubt whatsoever can remain about what we are understanding. Alternatively, it amounts to the same thing to say that by 'intuition' I understand the indubitable conceptual act of the pure and attentive mind,[35] which conceptual act springs from the light of reason alone.[36] Because this act is simpler, it is more certain, than deduction, which, however, as we have noted above,[37] a human being also cannot perform wrongly.[38] Thus everyone can mentally intuit that he exists, that he is

[33] Cf. *Discourse*, pt. I, § 12, and pt. II, § 4, for Descartes' devastatingly negative judgment on the state of philosophy in his time: 'But, having learned, in college, that one could not imagine anything so strange and so incredible that it had not been said by one of the philosophers … .' Cf. also Montaigne, *Essais*, bk. II, ch. 12 ('An apology for Raymond Sebond'): 'Nihil tam absurde dici potest quod non dicatur ab aliquo philosophorum.' Montaigne is quoting Cicero – cf. *De divinatione*, bk. II, ch. 58, sec. 119.

[34] On the perplexing question of whether deduction is ultimately reducible to intuition cf. R. 3, §§ 5 and 8, R. 7, §§ 1 and 5, R. 9, § 1, R. 11, §§ 1–2, and R. 12, § 22. The problem is that deduction is caught between Scylla and Charybdis: On the one side, the simpler it becomes, the more certain – because the more like intuition – it becomes; on the other side, the more complex it becomes, the less certain – because the more dependent on memory – it becomes. This tension is already squarely located in §§ 5 and 8 of R. 3, the very rule that systematically lays out the distinction between intuition and deduction.

[35] Is this description of intuition as being apodictic any less remarkable than the corresponding account of deduction (cf. R. 2, § 4, R. 3, §§ 4–5 and 8, and R. 12, § 21)?

[36] Cf., e.g., AT, VII, 192 (Descartes' Response to Hobbes' Objection): '… everyone knows that by a "light in the intellect" is understood perspicuity of cognition.' But this 'light' is a metaphor which Descartes employs too extensively for evidence, the concept of which accordingly suffers. Cf. 'evidentia' and 'evidence' (and their variants) in the index and glossary of this volume, as well as *Discourse*, AT, VI, 7, 18–19, 32–33, 36, 38–40, 68, and 71, *Meditations*, AT, VII, 4, 10, 16, 25, 28–29, 32–34, 36, 49, 51, 53, 58, 61, 65, and 69–71, and *Principles*, AT, VIII/1, 8, 10, 12–13, 16, 20, 24, 26, 34, 36, and 39.

[37] Cf. R. 2, § 4.

[38] But see R. 12, § 21.

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existere, se cogitare, triangulum terminari tribus lineis tantum, globum unica superficie, et similia, quae longe plura sunt quam plerique animadvertant, quoniam ad tam facilia
[369] mentem convertere dedignantur. |

6. Caeterum ne qui forte moveantur vocis intuitus novo usu, aliarumque, quas eodem modo in sequentibus cogar a vulgari significatione removere, hic generaliter admoneo, me non plane cogitare, quomodo quaeque vocabula his ultimis temporibus fuerint in scholis usurpata, quia difficillimum foret iisdem nominibus uti, et penitus diversa sentire; sed me tantum advertere, quid singula verba Latine significent, ut, quoties propria desunt, illa transferam ad meum sensum, quae mihi videntur aptissima.

7. At vero haec intuitus evidentia et certitudo, non ad solas enuntiationes, sed etiam ad quoslibet discursus requiritur. Nam, exempli gratia, sit haec consequentia: 2 et 2 efficiunt idem quod 3 et 1; non modo intuendum est 2 et 2 efficere 4, et 3 et 1 efficere quoque 4, sed insuper ex his duabus propositionibus tertiam illam necessario concludi.

8. Hinc jam dubium esse potest, quare, praeter intuitum, hic alium adjunximus cognoscendi modum, qui fit per deductionem: per quam intelligimus, illud omne quod ex quibusdam aliis certo cognitis necessario concluditur. Sed hoc ita faciendum fuit, quia

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thinking,[39] that a triangle is bounded by only three lines, that a sphere is bounded by a single surface, and similar things, which are much more numerous than most might realize, since they disdain to turn their minds to such easy matters.

6. By the way, so that no one may be put off by the novel use of the term 'intuition'[40] as well as of other terms which, in the following remarks, I shall be forced, in the same manner, to remove from their vulgar signification, I here point out generally that I am not at all thinking of how each and every one of these words may have been used in the schools in the most recent times, because it would be very difficult to use the same expressions and to mean profoundly different things, but rather that I am paying attention only to what the individual words signify in Latin, so that, whenever appropriate ones are lacking, I shall transfer those to my meaning which seem to me the most apt.[41]

7. Yet this evidence[42] of and certainty of intuition is required, in fact, not only for propositional utterances, but also for any discursive arguments whatever. Take, for example, the inference that 2 plus 2 equals the same as 3 plus 1: Here one has to intuit, not only that 2 plus 2 make 4, as well as that 3 plus 1 also make 4, but also – above and beyond this – that the third proposition is a necessary conclusion from these two.[43]

8. Hence there may now be some doubt about why we have here added another mode of knowing besides intuition, which other mode comes about via deduction, by which we understand all that which one necessarily concludes from some other things known with certainty. But this had to be done thus, because very many things,

[39] Cf. *Discourse*, AT, VI, 32–33, *Meditations*, AT, VII, 24–27, *Principles*, AT, VIII/1, 6–8, etc. Thus the twin questions, first, whether intuition (*intuitus*) and deduction (*deductio*) represent two distinct species under a logical genus (which?), and, second, how both relate to inference (*illatio*), are not only leitmotifs of the *Rules*, but these issues also arise already in regard to what Descartes would later regard as his 'fundamentum certum et inconcussum' (cf. AT, VII, 12, 17–18, and 24–25), i.e., the proposition: 'Je pense, donc je suis.' ('Ego cogito, ergo sum.') Cf. furthermore AT, III, 247 f., and VII, 140.

[40] The Latin verb 'intueri' means 'to look at' or 'to gaze at' something directly, both literally, i.e., with the eyes, and metaphorically, i.e., with the mind. The usual usage is heavily weighted to the side of the literal, but Descartes shifts it decisively in favor of the metaphorical – thus the sharp distinction but alleged analogy between ocular intuition and mental intuition. Cf., e.g., R. 3, § 8, R. 7, § 5, R. 9, § 2, and R. 16, § 1.

[41] Cf. R. 13, § 5: 'Almost all philosophical controversies are about the meanings of words.'

[42] This is the first significant term used by Descartes after his 'definition of *meaning* as *use*' (cf. the previous paragraph). The Latin 'evidentia' represents the traditional translation of the Greek 'enargeia', i.e., 'distinctness' or 'intuitiveness'. 'The evident', which, in its primary and ultimate sense, is 'the self-evident', is both literally and etymologically *that which shows itself from out of itself* (*ex-videri*). On the meaning of the expression 'evidence' in the history of philosophy cf. Klaus Held, 'Evidenz', *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J. Ritter, vol. 2 (Darmstadt, 1972), cols. 829–834. On the signification of the term in Classical rhetoric cf. Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik. Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft* (Munich, 1960/1973), §§ 336, 357, and esp. 810 ff., as well as Cicero, *Academica*, bk. II, ch. 17 (also *Partitiones oratoriae*, VI, 20), and Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, IV, ii, 63–65, VI, ii, 27–35, VIII, iii, 61–71 and 86, and IX, ii, 40. There can hardly be any more accurate measure of the shift of thematic focus which takes place between the *Rules* and the *Meditations* than that what is arguably the single most important concern in the former is not mentioned even a single time in the latter *proper*: the substantive 'evidentia'.

[43] Cf. Euclid, *The Elements*, bk. I, Common Notion no. 1: 'Things which are equal to the same thing are also equal to one another.' Cf. also R. 12, § 14.

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